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OTS urges everyone to exercise caution around schools *August is Back to School Safety Month*

It's that time of year again when children wrap up their summer vacations and get ready to start the new school year. August is Back to School Safety Month, and the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) wants to remind parents, caregivers and roadway users to be extra cautious around schools.

It is a busy time for a lot of families who are handling back-to-school preparations, but that should not take away from the importance of making sure children are safe heading to school.

"Children are our future," OTS Director Rhonda Craft said. "We all need to do our part to provide a safe environment for children to get to and from school. It starts with being alert and aware, and exercising good roadway habits around schools."

OTS offers a few safety tips to keep in mind with school in session:

Parents

- Plan your route ahead of time.
- Always keep an eye out for children, especially during pick-up and drop-off times.
- Avoid distractions such as texting, talking on the phone, grooming or eating while behind the wheel.
- If your child is biking or walking to school, map out the safest route (safety spots to ask for help, best places to cross, and most direct path where child won't get lost). Teach them about traffic signals and signs, urge them to not wear earbuds and to stop and look both ways before using crosswalks.
- If your child takes the bus, remind them to line up five steps away from the curb and to always look out for cars before getting on or off the bus.
- Always buckle up. Practicing proper seat belt safety instills good habits that protect yourself and those you love.
- Look for school buses and know what to do when around them. Overhead flashing yellow lights mean you should prepare to stop, hazards flashing yellow lights means drive with caution and overhead flashing red lights means stop. The law requires you to stop from either direction until children are safely across the street and the red lights stop flashing.

Everyone

- Always use the crosswalk at an intersection with a stop light or sign.
- Turn down the volume on your earbuds and don't text while walking.
- Stop, look, listen, then cross.
- Obey all traffic laws, including following the posted speed limit, which is usually 25 MPH in school zones but may be as low as 15 MPG.

No matter how children get to school, it is crucial that everyone pays attention, looks out for one another and takes these necessary safety precautions.

